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THE EXHIBITION OF 1888.

THE National Academy has never held an exhibition more interesting or encouraging than this one. The average merit of works shown in previous exhibitions has never equalled that of this present collection. This is as it should be. It proves that American Art is advancing to higher position, and argues well for the evolution of what may be known as "the American School."

Five hundred and ninety-eight works have been accepted, including some pieces of sculpture. The committee of selection followed the plan of last year's committee, in choosing only as many of the most worthy pictures submitted as could be hung with advantage to the pictures, and to the ensemble of the exhibition. The result will more than compensate the committee for all the obloquy that may be heaped upon it by the painters whose works have been rejected. Too many of the past committees have been too liberal; they have sacrificed exhibitions to extend mistaken kindness to people possibly endowed with many Christian graces, but not with artistic ability.

In a different direction, the present committee has been extremely liberal; it has given generous recognition to the different schools of artistic expression. No previous Academy exhibition has displayed such catholicity. The members of even the extreme wing of the Society of American Artists are made to seem as much at home here as in their own exhibition.

The pictures do not, as a rule, run to large sizes; there seems to be little disposition for great display. There is, instead, an apparent endeavor on the part of almost every contributor to surpass the work he has shown in previous years. It is this which makes the average merit higher, and which gives the impression of greater seriousness, more dignity, than usual.

The artists, as a class, seem to be growing into greater simplicity of expression—that great characteristic of great art—not, however, the simplicity that degenerates into a mere exhibition of technical dexterity, but that which conveys the impression that the artist possesses the knowledge to enable him to do his work easily; that it is a pleasure to him and never becomes irksome.